

SOVIET POLICY IX \VARTIME

communiques and, therefore, were not subject to censorship. The situation thus created clearly favored the Soviet Union from the very beginning, and in the battle of propaganda with the British Russia had an obvious legal superiority. The consequences of this unequal arrangement were felt by the British, by the Iranians, and by the smaller Allied nations whose legations conducted information programs.

Between 1941 and 1944 the Soviet censor generally did not attempt to put a stop to incoming Reuters dispatches. Toward the end of 1944, however, after the oil crisis, and throughout 1945, the Soviet censor freely used his veto prerogative. Thus, in the period of gradually mounting tension between the West and Russia, the Iranian press was receiving a rather one-sided presentation of facts from Soviet sources and was refused adequate British comment on various events.

The censorship of outgoing dispatches was also prejudicial to British interests. The Reuters correspondent in Teheran was compelled to submit his dispatches to censorship. The Soviet censor stubbornly refused to pass anything that might describe Soviet activities in Iran too openly and especially those in the northern provinces. The same applied to any other correspondent residing in Teheran. As a result, the American public was also deprived of an unimpeded news service from this strategically vital area. The only way legally to avoid Soviet censorship was to leave Iran and send a dispatch from another area in the Middle East not subject to Soviet control. Bagdad in Iraq was the nearest place to Teheran, but an overland journey would normally take three days. By plane this distance could

be covered in two and a half hours but to obtain a priority on a military airplane was not an easy matter. No matter how quickly a Western correspondent might arrive outside the boundaries of Iran, the Tass release from Moscow concerning Iranian affairs would always precede his account. For this reason neither American nor British correspondents accredited in Teheran ever left the country to send a dispatch.

A few good examples of such Soviet obstruction can be cited. In 1943 Archbishop Spellman of New York, as Chaplain-General of the United States Army, visited Iran to inspect the installations of the Persian Gulf Command. He also paid a visit to a Polish refugee camp